MiTT—An ADA and FA Challenge

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The Army is in a state of transition, and the Field Artillery (FA) and Air Defense Artillery (ADA) branches have a big role to play in that transition. Both branches are working to accomplish and support three major efforts—winning the War on Terrorism, transforming our unit organizations to support the Army's modularity and force modernization effort and adjusting to the challenges of the Base Realignment and Closure effort. Both branches also must continue supporting Forces Command and Training and Doctrine Command mission requirements in addition to the newest shared requirement—transition teams.

As part of this shared requirement, ADA and FA are working together to ensure success for ADA officers deploying as fire/effects officers (i.e. fire support officers or FSOs) on transition teams.

Full-Spectrum Operations. Transition teams (to include military, border, national police and police transition teams; embedded training teams, operation mentor liaison teams, and other specialty transitional teams) are part of the Army's full-spectrum operational concept, as outlined in *Field Manual (FM) 3-0 Operations*.

"Army forces combine offensive, defensive, stability or civil support operations simultaneously as part of an interdependent joint force to seize, retain and exploit the initiative, accepting prudent risk to create opportunities to achieve decisive results. They employ synchronized action—lethal and nonlethal—proportional to the mission and informed by a thorough understanding of the operational environment's variables. Mission command that conveys intent and an appreciation of all aspects of the situation guides the adaptive use of Army forces."

Within this paradigm, the Army conducts high-intensity conflict (HIC) operations, both offensive and defensive, stability operations and civil support operations

(see Figure 1, Page 24). Transition teams are unique in that their missions and objectives crisscross throughout all of the Army's operational missions.

The unique nature of the transition team mission requires individuals who are competent, confident and agile—the same requisite skills discussed in *FM 6-22 Army Leadership*. The introduction to this manual sums up exactly what is required for Army leaders.

"It is critical that Army leaders be agile, multiskilled *pentathletes* who have strong moral character, broad knowledge and keen intellect. They must display these attributes and leader competencies bound by the concept of the Warrior Ethos. … Army leaders must set the example, teach and mentor."

The back-and-forth shifts from HIC to stability operations to civil support operations have developed a flexible Army that can make these operational transitions with relative ease. The training methodology that focuses on developing competent, confident and agile leaders has made it possible to operate successfully across the full-spectrum operational battlefield.

As a result, the Army is developing an officer corps that is no longer primarily focused on HIC operations. Rather, Army officers have become "plug-and-play" leaders, able to execute a myriad of tasks whatever duty position they are assigned. So, every Army officer can operate successfully on a transition team.

Supporting Transition Teams. Supporting transition teams is not new to FA. In fact, FA is required to fill 120 hard-coded fires/effects officer positions each year. The burden of filling these positions has fallen primarily to FA captains attending the FA Captain's Career Course (FACCC). Historically, 29 percent of FACCC graduates has had a transition team as a follow-on assignment—though the actual number of FA captains who have served on a transition team is much higher because many have had a transition team deployment before attending the FACCC.

Although this trend is not the primary cause of the large exodus of company grade FA officers—13.7 percent in fiscal year 2007, which would have approached almost 18 percent if not for the stop/loss orders supporting the surge effort—it has certainly played a role in the overall health and ability to execute common core tasks within the FA.

In addition to the transition team requirements, which must be filled to 100 percent, the FA must meet its other branch requirements with a decreasing population of company grade officers. The FA Branch Chief states in a letter to the field that, "[I]ncreased company grade attrition [has] contributed to a growing imbalance between the number of captains in the force and the number of authorizations as we grow structure … the Army's manning guidance is to fill deployers first (both operational units and transition teams) and then to balance, as best we can, other units across the Army. … We are at the point where, in some instances, we may no longer be able to meet that standard."

Without some relief, FA simply will not be able to continue meeting these multiple-mission requirements. Enter the competent, confident and agile leadership of the ADA officer corps and its willingness take on the challenge of deploying as transition team fires/effects officers.

Training the ADA officers to execute the FA tasks (i.e. call for fire, close air support or CAS, and close combat attack or CCA) and missions (i.e. company and battalion level fire support operations) fell to the Basic Fire Support Branch in the FA School where a transitional course was developed.

CPT Mark A. Hamstra, from the 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade and assigned to the Fort Riley transition teams, observes his smoke placement during the Fires/Effects Transition Team Course three-day live fire exercise on Fort Sill, Oklahoma, 25 June. (Photo by CPT Jonathan C. Schmidt, A Battery, 1st Battalion, 30th Field Artillery)

Fires/Effects Transition Team Course. The Fires/Effects Transition Team Course (FET-TC) is an enabling course that provides an ADA officer with the minimum necessary skills required to operate as a FSO. Initially, the skills included all of the requisite tasks that FA lieutenants and captains receive in their officer training courses. This skill list was vetted against the experiences of recently returned FA transition team veterans as well as the Fort Riley Transition Team Fires Committee.

The final course objectives are to ensure the students are proficient in target location and call for fire methods; knowledgeable of planning and coordinating joint close air support employment for both fixed- and rotary-winged assets; and knowledgeable of the fire support products and the Decide, Detect, Deliver and Assess (D^3A) process used for contemporary company and battalion tactical operations and urban scenarios. These objectives are the foundation of the course critical task list (Figure 2).

Taking into consideration critical tasks from the ADA Basic Course, the ADA CCC and the Fort Riley Transition Team Training Course, the FA School designed the critical task list and focused on the tasks specific for operating successfully as a knowledgeable fires/effects officer. The approved course structure consisted of a combination of practical exercises, simulations and field training with the minimum amount possible devoted to classroom instruction. The end result was a course where only 18 of 136 total training hours were in a traditional classroom environment.

Call for Fire, CCA and CAS. The FET-TC successfully used practical and simulation exercises in addition to a live-fire culmination event to achieve call-for-fire proficiency and knowledge of CCA and CAS. The students spent three days in the Call for Fire Trainer and worked through increasingly more difficult and detailed scenarios that built upon their newly learned skills acquired through constant drilling—in essence, the call for fire became a battle drill. The students applied these drills to new situations and missions via a distributed learning center known as the Joint Fires and Effects Training Simulator (JFETS).

Students received two days of rotary-wing CCA and fixed-wing CAS instruction in the JFETS facility. On the first day, the student to instructor ratio was three to two. This enabled the students to move through exercises quickly and receive personal and immediate feedback from a joint tactical air controller (JTAC) and an Air Force pilot. The students achieved familiarity with CCA and CAS after this first day of instruction.

The second day consisted of similar, though progressively more difficult, urban and open terrain simulations, culminating in a networked exercise where the students freely applied their new skills using combinations of call for fire, CCA and CAS missions. This final day of training gave the students the knowledge level required to meet the course objectives.

Finally, at the live-fire culmination exercise, ADA students trained alongside FA Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) III students for three days, calling for fire from a static observation post. During these three days, each Air Defender called for fire using multiple munitions, including high explosive, M825 smoke, white phosphorous smoke and illumination. The average mission count, during this time, for each ADA student was 10.

Additionally, on the first and third day of the live-fire exercise, students worked with JTACs and Air Force F-16s on CAS nine-line procedures as well as target-talk-on tactics, techniques and procedures. Thus, after 10 days of call-for-fire training, ADA officers had the same target engagement skills as company-level FSOs.

Fire Support Planning. Team-based planning was introduced by means of role playing FSOs in task force HIC scenarios. Students learned the roles and responsibilities of a fire supporter, becoming proficient with fire support products and knowledgeable about the D^3A process.

The students worked through a series of battalion-level operations order (OPORD) exercises, learning the three products of a company-level fire plan: fire support overlay, target list worksheet and the fire support execution matrix. After three battalion OPORDs, the students were proficient in developing these products.

Because many Iraqi and Afghan units require Coalition support for their operations, proficiency with these products enables fires/effects officers to translate their transition team counterparts' fires concept into a commonly understood format for execution by Coalition units assigned to support those missions.

The second goal for this objective was to know and understand the D^3A process. To achieve this goal, students were introduced to a brigade-level OPORD and guided through a fire support battalion military decision-making process HIC exercise. They were assigned one of three roles (S2, S3 or FSO) in a heavy brigade combat team. Deliverables included the mobility and combined obstacles overlay derived from the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) process, target list worksheet, fire support execution matrix, fire paragraph and attack guidance matrix derived from the high-payoff and high-value target lists. Through development of these products, students learned that the D^3A process is continuous and only successful through the combined efforts of the S2, S3 and FSO.

The fire planning portion culminated in an urban IPB exercise where the deliverables were meeting engagement packages for individuals and targeting packages for systems. Students used a combination of civil affairs and information operations tools and the D^3A targeting process to develop the required products.

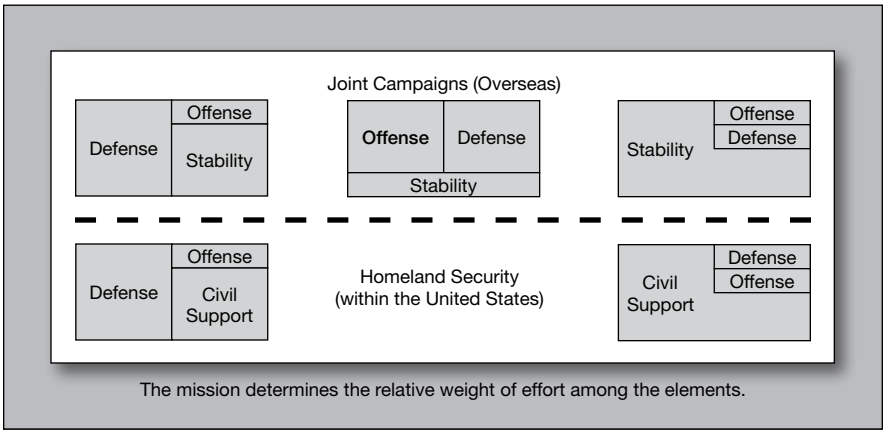

Figure 1: Full Spectrum Operations—The Army's Operational Concept

It can be argued that the ADA students should focus more on urban exercises instead of HIC operations because they will be fighting a low-intensity insurgency in primarily an urban environment. However, the common theme between HIC and low-intensity conflicts is targeting. Whether one focuses on targeting the armor assets in a force-on-force fight or targeting the economic center of gravity in a more populous area, the D^3A targeting process applies across the full spectrum of operations. Students walked away knowledgeable about its application.

FET-TC Instruction. The FET-TC instruction is first-rate. The student to instructor ratio allows for immediate feedback of students' performance by experienced Army and Air Force mentors. The student to instructor ratio directly contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency with which the course is conducted. Tasks and deliverables are based on standard schoolhouse practices and taught by professional, experienced instructors.

What sets this course apart is the flexibility to adjust training based on its perpetual daily after-action reviews (AARs). The instructors constantly assess the students understanding of the materials covered. During the pilot course, the FET-TC instructors made several "in-stride" changes that enhanced the training and learning environment. For example, originally there was only one day scheduled in the JFETS facility. After that first day, the AAR concluded that students were only *familiar* with CAS and CCA. The instructors quickly made an adjustment and scheduled another day in the JFETS facility during which students achieved the "knowledgeable" objective (Figure 2).

The instructors also balance available resources and time. There is a large amount of information to teach and learn. Read-ahead packets are produced for each class so more time can be spent with hands-on training. Additionally, homework packages reinforce classroom instruction and ensure that students achieve the critical task list objectives. The course leadership also coordinates with units on Fort Sill to host two forums with officers who have been deployed as fires/effects officers on transition teams.

After three weeks of training in the pilot course, all learning objectives were met, and some were exceeded. All ADA officers walked away proficient in target location and call-for-fire methods, knowledgeable about planning and coordinating joint CCA and CAS, and knowledgeable on fire support products and the D^3A process. Moreover, they took away with a better appreciation of the intricacies of the tactical fight.

Proficient in:
- locating a target by polar plot.
- locating a target by grid coordinates.
- call for fire.
- adjust fire mission.
- fire for effect mission.
- conducting danger close fire mission.
- conducting an immediate suppression/immediate smoke mission.
- conducting an illumination mission.
- preparing a target list worksheet.
- preparing a fire support overlay.
- preparing a fire support execution matrix.

Familiar with:
- coordinating a close air support (CAS) request.

Knowledgeable:
- in conducting a close combat attack call for fire.
- in directing a CAS mission in the absence of a certified controller.
- in conducting fire support military decision making process.
- in developing a fire plan to support a defensive operation.
- in developing a fire plan to support an offensive operation.

Figure 2: Fires/Effects Transition Team Course Critical Task List

FET-TC Future. Continuing to focus on the commonalities between ADA and FA is what will ensure future success for this course. With the pending merger of both branches' schools into the Fires Center of Excellence, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, it is imperative that we embrace the commonality of our missions vice the differences. By focusing on developing competent, confident and agile leaders, our joint roles in the current force and the future Army will continue to grow. Sharing the transition team burden with ADA is beneficial for the FA because it partially relieves a costly burden in both resources and manpower.

Likewise, the FET-TC and its tactical focus are beneficial for developing a more flexible and tactically skilled ADA officer and expanding ADA's role in the War on Terrorism. For the Army, the FET-TC will increase the pool of skilled officers from which to draw fires/effects officers. It is important to realize that the FET-TC is not a merger of duties for the FA and ADA branches. Rather, it is an expansion of joint leadership, enabling a greater chance of mission accomplishment within the Army's operational concept—full-spectrum operations.

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The authors would like to acknowledge and thank Colonels Kevin M. Batule and Donald H. Myers for their mentorship during the first Fires/Effects Transition Team Course and LTC Christopher P. Talcott for his guidance with this article.